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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MESSER).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

June 15, 2015.

I hereby appoint the Honorable LUKE MESSER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 6, 2015, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 1:50 p.m.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, the strange kaleidoscope of this congressional session began with the proposed shutdown of Homeland Security but moved on to the bipartisan action to fix the vexing SGR-Medicare funding formula, the so-called "doc fix" to prevent dramatic cuts to providers.

Yes, it is still hard to overcome deep divisions, philosophical difference, and some real serious politics. The heated

rhetoric and convoluted voting on the recent trade package is the latest example. Wouldn't it be great if we could take a step back and find ways to unite us to solve a major problem?

Well, we have got a major problem that is staring us in the face right now. We are in the midst of the 33rd short-term transportation funding extension that is a result of our inability to pay for 2015 infrastructure with 1993 dollars. That is because of our inability to raise the gas tax since 1993.

The demands for transportation solutions grow, and the harm inflicted on families occurs every day. It costs them over \$300 a year just in damage to their cars from road maintenance that has fallen apart. We are paying a \$125-billion-a-year penalty for congestion.

Americans, make no mistake, are paying the price for this dysfunction, and the people who are partners at the State and local level and in the private sector are having great difficulty doing their part without the certainty of the Federal partnership that has been the bedrock, that has been the foundation of national transportation policy since President Eisenhower.

Now, there is a little hint of sunshine here because this week, on Wednesday, we will be having the first hearing on transportation finance since my Republican friends took control of Congress 56 months ago.

What if we took advantage of that daylight to expand the scope of the discussion? What if we were able to have at the same witness table the president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Tom Donohue, and the president of the AFL-CIO, Richard Trumka, who don't much agree on anything, but they are united in their firm belief that raising the gas tax, getting the transportation funding to rebuild and renew America, is absolutely essential?

We could be joined by people who understand that hundreds of thousands of family-wage jobs would be possible if we met our transportation obligations.

We could have representatives from State and local government, transit agencies, the environmental community, safety advocates all joined at the same table. We could have the eloquence of Governor Bill Graves, who is currently president of the American Trucking Association, but he was Republican Governor of Kansas, who raised the gas tax not once, but twice. He could be joined by the American Automobile Association, which has come out strongly in favor of a gas tax to be able to meet the needs of the motoring public. Why wouldn't we want those people there?

We could invite State legislators from six very red Republican States—Idaho, Utah, Georgia, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Iowa—that all raised the gas tax this year. They didn't just talk about it; they acted. Six red States raising the gas tax already in 2015.

I am optimistic that we can capitalize on the glimmers of life we are seeing. If we can just listen to the people at the State and local level, the private sector, organized labor, people who build, maintain, and use our transportation system, they could be part of that deliberative process. I am confident that we, in Congress, could develop a united front on an issue that has been controversial in the past but is no longer.

When people step up, when they accept responsibility and work cooperatively, we can do what was done in Idaho, Georgia, Utah, Iowa, South Dakota, and Nebraska. Congress can do that. And after all the acrimony and bad feeling and partisan division that has lingered, wouldn't this be the right time to do so?

PIVOT TO AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. RUSSELL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. RUSSELL. Mr. Speaker, Congress has a chance this week to turn

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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